



Instructional Leader or School Manager?

Principal Name: Kelly Plank

School Name: Northeastern Middle School

Principal's Email Contact: kplank@nws.k12.in.us

Background Leading to My Inquiry (Slides 2-3)

After an IPLI mini-research project identified many of my waking hours was spent completing managerial tasks, I decided to take back control of my work calendar and personal time. The ultimate goal is to increase efficiency in my calendar and limit surprises by scheduling instructional time as well as managerial tasks. This could increase my instructional leadership opportunities and minimize interruptions in my personal time.

The research in the fall of 2021, led to the discovery that far too much of my time was allocated and used up by managerial tasks, including much of my personal time and school day. I tracked every 10 minutes of my day starting at 6 am and ending at 10 pm for one solid work week. This allowed for 8 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period, which if we are being honest doesn't normally happen. Some astonishing results prevailed and pushed me to wonder whether I am a school manager, handling the day-to-day business, or an instructional leader, leading my team to a bigger and brighter future.

My analysis showed 47% of my day was spent tending to managerial tasks such as finding substitute teachers to cover classrooms, arrival duty, lunch duty, dismissal duty, etc. Only 22% of my day was spent on instructional tasks such as behavioral instruction, social and emotional well-being, and working with teachers in the classroom. Uncovered was also the problem with personal time infringement. 31% of my day accounts for my personal time which is about 5 hours a day. Those 5 hours also include my drive time to and from work, shower time, and meals. At school, I am simply not getting into the classrooms when I am there to be the instructional leader that I want to be. At home, I am not present with my family. All these factors lead to dissatisfaction with my job in its current state.

The Purpose of My Inquiry (Slide 4)

The purpose of this inquiry is to provide myself with a balanced life and job satisfaction by scheduling time throughout my day for specific tasks and duties. I can then create more time to be in the classroom working with teachers. Early in IPLI year one, principals were provided with their Process Communication Model, PCM, results. No surprise to anyone who knows me, but the results revealed that I am thinker phase and thinker base. This explains the frustration and stress I feel from not having a routine or balance in my life.

My Wondering (Slide 5)

I knew that for me to gain the balance and job satisfaction that I crave, I would need to figure out how exactly to gain control of my time. This inspired the wondering, "How will an increased balance of the use of my time lead to more instructional leadership as opposed to managerial tasks?"

My Actions (Slide 6)

To accomplish my goal, I set out to schedule the bulk of my managerial tasks that took up most of my time throughout the day. I started by not allowing myself to work on substitute teacher coverage until 7 am which is when I arrive at work. Previously, I would work on a coverage plan at night before bed and in the morning when I woke up. Now, I only work on the plan after I arrive at work and not when I am at home with my family. The product is the same. I always find the coverage that I need, but now I am waiting until no further absence requests can be submitted. I also blocked off my schedule for arrival and departure duty as well as lunch duty. I scheduled a "Focus Time" at the suggestion of Google Insights that built time in to work on larger projects and inherently managed my stress level surrounding those projects. Defining this time in my schedule has prevented overlapping commitments in my day that make me feel stressed and hinder my time management. It also gives me the satisfaction I need from interacting with students throughout the day and filling my bucket as well as gaining some time back in my personal time block.

Instructional time was more difficult to manage. I began by blocking off two periods per day to be in the classrooms. To make this possible, I had to delegate tasks to others in the building. The first task was to off load some of the projects I was solely responsible for such as the Positive Behavior Interventions Team which went to the guidance counselor, discipline issues were routed to the Dean of Students first, and team collaboration time was split between three admin rather than falling on my shoulders alone. This freed up time during my day to make the time in the classroom possible.

My last action was to set a timer at work to indicate when it was time to go home. The audio and visual cue I needed to tell my brain that it is quitting time at work and time to spend time with my family came in the form of an alarm on my phone that plays Elton John every day at 4:30 pm. This tiny but mighty action has made it easier for me to walk out the door when the time comes at the end of the day.

Data Collection (Slide 7)

The tools and resources needed to complete the research process were not difficult. The first tool I used was the *Daylio* application on my phone. It tracked my feelings every day by using emojis to depict my feelings. I also kept anecdotal notes about my day every day in the app. Google Calendar has a function I started using called Insights that tells me how, where, and with whom my day is being spent. I used this tool to track my managerial and instructional tasks and the calendar itself to code my time into those categories. These tools helped me collect and process my data.

My Data (Slides 8-11)

The quantitative data revealed many insights to my days by using Google Calendars functions. I have set my schedule to allow for 47.5 working hours from 7am to 4:30 pm everyday Monday through Friday. Fifteen hours per week are scheduled managerial duties plus another Seven hours a week are accounted for by meetings for case conferences, district level meetings, or student support meetings. Seven hours a week for observations were scheduled. Also tracked were four hours per week for behavioral coaching which falls under the instructional time umbrella. Two hours a week were scheduled for time to work on larger projects such as testing schedules or updating the school handbook which falls under the managerial tasks.

Qualitative data that was tracked was a little more subjective but revealing, nonetheless. Using *Daylio*, I was able to track 35 days of my mood at the end of my workday. Two days were

classified as “rad”, seventeen days were “good”, ten days were “meh”, and six days were “bad”. Zero days were marked as terrible.

My Discoveries (Slide 12)

Generally speaking, scheduling time for unavoidable tasks and recurring tasks creates a sense of calm and balance for the thinker base and phase like myself. Scheduling managerial tasks and instructional time limits interruptions and constructs a focus or goal for the period of time.

Within my quantitative data, I was able to deduce that I increased my personal time to 6.5 hours per day as opposed to five pre action research. I reduced the number of hours spent completing managerial tasks from 7.5 hours per day to six hours per day. My instructional hours stayed the exact same. Even though I did not gain many hours on my instructional time per day, I was able to manage to get my managerial tasks to fit into my schedule work hours. This is a great discovery because I can spend more time with my family at home without interruptions which leads to a better work life balance.

The qualitative data was the most surprising to me when I dug a little deeper into the numbers. I discovered that thirteen of the seventeen “good” days were days when I had to substitute teach in the classrooms. This tells me that being with the students and in the classroom is what helps me fill my bucket throughout the day. The two “rad” days were days that I was feeding my thinker base and phase at IPLI. Thursdays are my lowest mood day of the week. Thursdays tend to be the day that I am scheduled in case conferences. Mondays are my highest mood days of the week since more teachers call in on Mondays and I am needed in the classrooms. Plus, I do not schedule recurring meetings on Mondays.

Where I Am Heading Next (Slide 13)

The data is clear that I am heading in the right direction to reach my goal of creating a better balance in my life and in my day as well as increasing my job satisfaction. The benefits extend to the students and the teachers by allowing me to give more of my time to them. New wonderings have emerged in this process:

- 1) What will happen when I change the way case conferences are scheduled giving me more control of my calendar?
- 2) What can I discover when I dive deeper into the functions and data of Google Insights?
- 3) How can I teach my staff or other administrators to implement these small changes?
- 4) What benefit could this type of information provide to students?

Since March 2020, like most educators, I have moved into a state of emergency status. Working long hard hours to meet all the demands of COVID. My love for the profession started to change. The emergency status I was living in turned into a chronic status. This just made the situation even harder. By the beginning of this year, I was ready to go back to the classroom to find my love. Scheduling and allocating my time showed me that when I get control of my everyday tasks, I actually create more time for what fills my bucket at work. I can relax more at my job and do what I love, making the world better for kids.

Bibliography (Slide 14)

Fichtman Dana, N. (2009). Leading with Passion and Knowledge. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Fisher, D. (2021). Leading the rebound: 20+ must-DOS to restart teaching and learning. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Regier, N. (2020). Seeing people through: Unleash your leadership potential with the process communication model. Oakland, CA: Berret - Koehler.

Citation

Presentation

Plank, Kelly, J. (2022). Instructional Leader or School Manager. Presented at the annual Indiana Principal Leadership Institute Action Research Showcase, Indianapolis, IN.

Publication

Plank, Kelly, J. (2022). Instructional Leader or School Manager. Retrieved from

Instructional Leader or School Manager

Northeastern Middle School

Kelly Plank
kplank@nws.k12.in.us

Background

My mini action research in the fall of 2021 led to the discovery that far too much of my time was allocated and used up by managerial tasks, including much of my personal time. I am simply not getting into the classrooms when I am at school to be the instructional leader that I want to be. All of these factors led to dissatisfaction with my job.

Mini Action Research

80 Hour Week

Personal ~ 5 hours per day (31%)

Instructional - 3.5 hours per day (22%)

Managerial - 7.5 hours per day (47%)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
6:00	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
7:00	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
8:00	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
9:00	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
10:00	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
11:00	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
12:00	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
1:00	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Red
2:00	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Yellow
3:00	Red	Red	Red	Green	Red
4:00	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Yellow
5:00	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
6:00	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red
7:00	Red	Green	Red	Green	Red
8:00	Green	Green	Red	Green	Red
9:00	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green
10:00	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green

Purpose of This Inquiry

BALANCE and JOB SATISFACTION

Because I am a thinker phase and base, not having a routine or balance in my life leads to frustration.

The purpose of this inquiry is to determine if by scheduling my time for specific tasks and duties, I can then create more time to be in the classroom working with teachers.

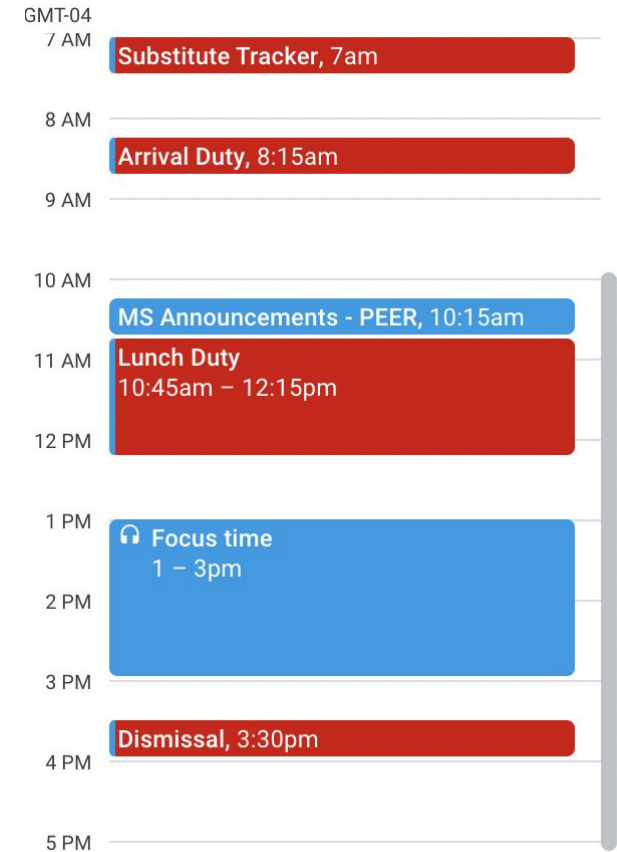
My Wondering



With this purpose, I wondered how would an increased balance of the use of my time lead to more instructional leadership as opposed to managerial tasks?

My Actions

- Data Collection (one month with true fidelity)
- Streamline tasks
- Set Limits
- Schedule time to be in the classrooms
- Schedule time for managerial tasks
- Delegate



4:30 PM

Go Home 🏠☀️❤️🎵, every weekday



Data Collection & Tools



Google Calendar - scheduled time for managerial tasks in my calendar and held to it

Google Insights - calendar analysis



Daylio - tracked my feelings based on my daily activities

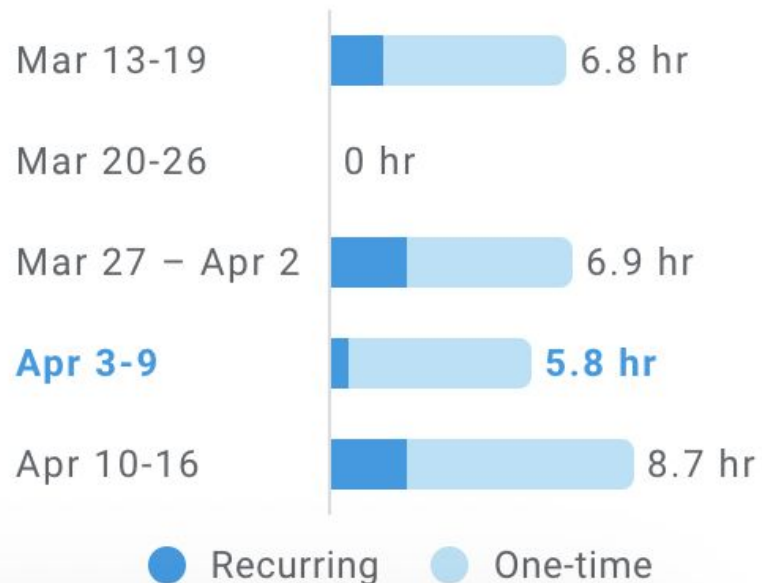
Quantitative (6 weeks of data)

- 47.5 hour work week (7am-4:30 pm daily)
- 15 hours a week in “duties” or managerial tasks scheduled
- 7 hours weekly average in meetings
- 7 hours a week scheduled for classroom observations
- 4 hours a week tracked for behavior coaching with students
- 2 hours a week for Focus Time for larger projects

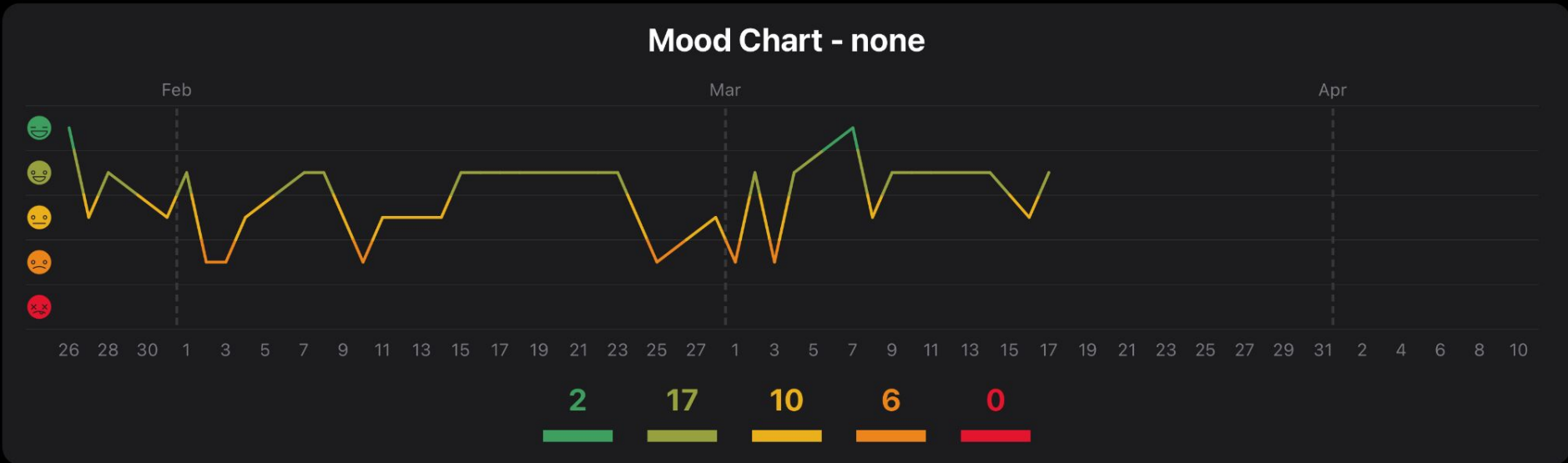
Time in meetings ⓘ

Most meetings
Tuesdays

Daily average
0.9 hr



Qualitative



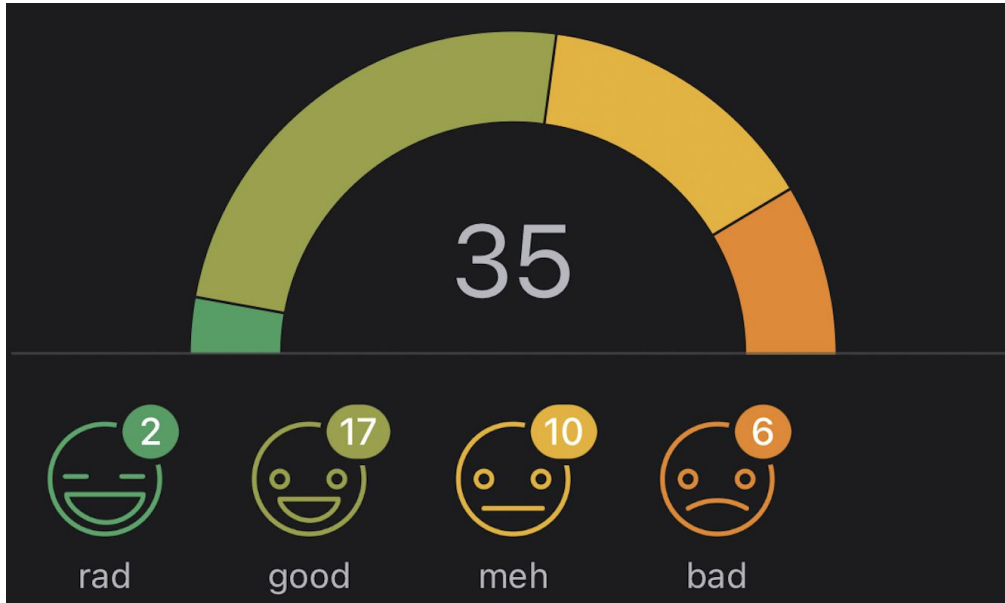
2 - Rad

17 - Good

10 - Meh

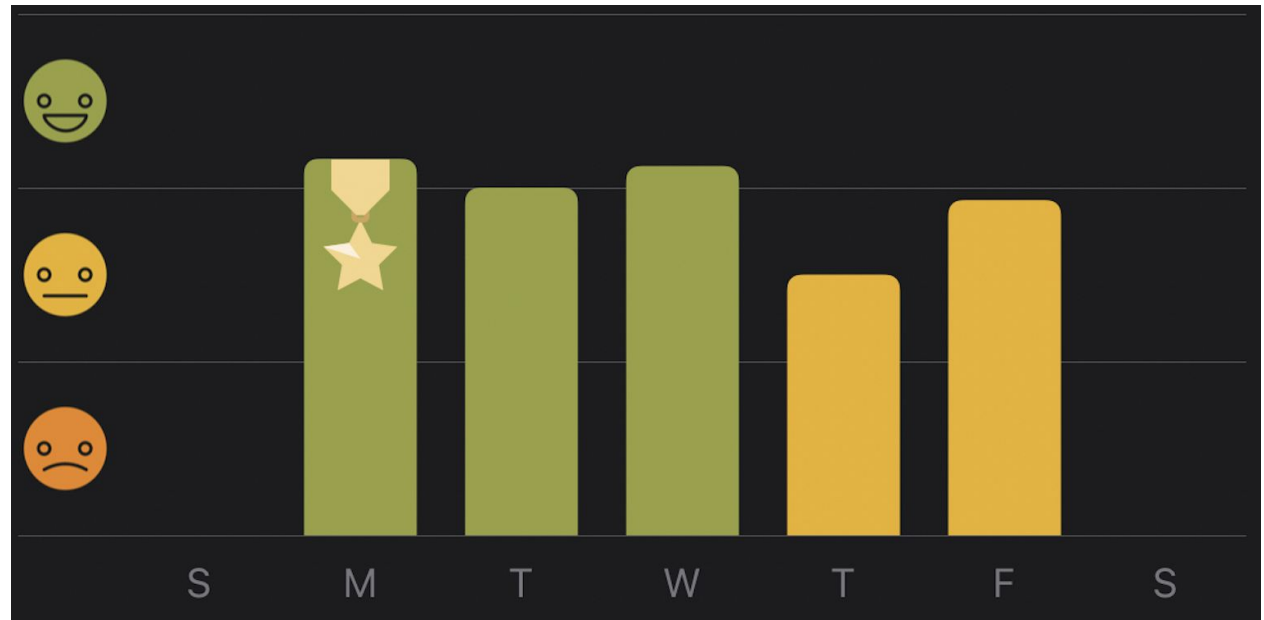
6 - Bad

Qualitative



Mondays are less stress.
Thursday tend to be ACR days.

Of 17 “good”
days, 13 days
I subbed in
classes.



Quantitative Compared

Before Actions

Personal ~ 5 hours per day (31%)

Instructional - 3.5 hours per day (22%)

Managerial - 7.5 hours per day (47%)

After Actions

Personal ~ 6.5 hours per day (40%)

Instructional - 3.5 hours per day (22%)

Managerial - 6 hours per day (38%)

The biggest benefit is fitting the managerial tasks into my work day along with the instructional tasks creating a better balance.

My Discoveries

1) Scheduling and allocating time creates balance.

- Focus Time (scheduled time for large projects)
- Classroom Time (scheduled observations)
- Managerial Time (scheduled duties, parent phone calls)

2) Internal Factor - scheduled time meant I had to work on what was scheduled not what I felt like doing

3) External Factor - Out of my control issues and limiting those

4) Lower stress levels on days where I was collaborating with students or about students made me feel more like an instructional leader than a manager.

Where Am I Heading Next

What I have learned through this process is that having a handle on my schedule not only benefits me at work, benefits the students and teachers, but also benefits my overall job satisfaction. I feel in more in control.

I do have have some new wonderings:

- 1) What will happen when I change the way case conferences are scheduled giving me more control of my calendar?
- 2) What can I discover when I dive deeper into the functions and data I can gain from Google Insights?
- 3) How can I teach my staff or other administrators to implement these small changes?
- 4) What benefit could this type of information provide to students?

Conclusion

Since March 2020, like most educators, I moved in to a state of emergency status. Working long hard hours to meet all the demands of COVID. My love for the profession started to change. The emergency status I was living in turned into a chronic status. This just made the situation even harder. By the beginning of this year, I was ready to go back to the classroom to find my love. Scheduling and allocating my time, showed me that when I get control of my everyday tasks, I actually create more time for what fills my bucket at work. I am able to relax more at my job and do what I love, making the world better for kids.

Bibliography

Fichtman Dana, N. (2009). *Leading with Passion and Knowledge*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Fisher, D. (2021). *Leading the rebound: 20+ must-DOS to restart teaching and learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Regier, N. (2020). *Seeing people through: Unleash your leadership potential with the process communication model*. Oakland, CA: Berrett - Koehler.